



SRA Guidance Series

205

Baby-sitters' handbook

by

JUDY FLANDER



. . . to help young people solve the problems of everyday living

The author would like to thank Dr. Julius B. Richmond, Chairman of the Department of Pediatrics, University of Illinois Medical School, for checking the manuscript; and Murray S. Flander for his valuable editorial assistance.

Baby-sitting isn't child's play

- How much should you charge for sitting?
- How should you feed a baby?
- What should you do if a child becomes ill?

These problems—and many more—may come up in the life of a baby-sitter. Do you have the answers?

Anyone can be a baby-sitter. But not everyone can be a good baby-sitter. This isn't a sitting-around-and-letting-the-cash-pile-up kind of job. It takes intelligence, the ability to think clearly and act decisively, some knowledge of child care, and a real liking for children.

If you have these qualifications, you can be a successful and sought-after baby-sitter. This booklet will help give you the information you need on caring for children, getting along with your employers, and making the most of your sitting jobs.



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Baby-sitters' handbook

by

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Illustrated by
Bea Leonard



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You're sitting pretty

SO YOU'VE joined, or are about to join, the teen-honored "profession" of baby-sitting!

Well, you've picked a job that will make you a sought-after person by parents of young children. Your baby-sitting services are essential to them. Parents don't want to be shut off from the rest of the world—they need to get away from their home and children occasionally. You make these outings possible for them. So baby-sitting gives you the satisfaction of being of real help to others.

What baby-sitting can do for you

Just as important, baby-sitting has plenty to offer *you*. For one thing, it gives you valuable job training for your future career. You'll be learning to assume responsibility and to make decisions on your own. You'll also be learning to get along with adults of differing outlooks and personalities, which is excellent preparation for later employer-employee relationships.

Baby-sitting also prepares you for your future as a parent. It gives you advance training and invaluable experience. By the time you have your own children, you will be a veteran in child care. The multitude of small problems that puzzle young parents with their first baby will pose no great difficulties for you.

You've chosen a very pleasant way to earn money, too. The working conditions are generally good. Once in a while you'll work afternoons or an occasional Saturday morning. But usually your jobs will come in the evenings.

You can also work at your own convenience. If you have a steady Saturday night date, you can limit your sitting assignments to Sundays

or week nights. And you can always change your schedule—unless you've already accepted a sitting date—to suit your other plans. Imagine having a job that lets *you* decide when you want to work!

In addition, the pay is good. Up and down the country, it ranges from 25 to 75 cents an hour. And to a great extent *you* set your own wages.

There's plenty of leisure time on the job, especially on evening assignments when children are usually in bed by 8:00. Unless you are sitting with a new baby, you may have the whole evening to yourself. This leaves you free to read, study, or just relax.

Above all, baby-sitting is fun. Just being with children, watching their reactions and hearing their questions, is an exciting experience.

For all these reasons, baby-sitting is a rewarding job opportunity for fellows as well as girls. More and more high school boys—including football players and basketball stars—are becoming baby-sitters. Baby-sitting, they find, is no job for a sissy. It takes intelligence, ingenuity, and the ability to think clearly and act decisively. And if baby-sitting is good training for future mothers, it also has some valuable experience to offer future fathers.



It's important that a sitter have the trust of parents and children.

Success as a sitter, however, depends mostly on the kind of person you are. Do you have the characteristics necessary for the job? Before

Can everyone qualify?

Baby-sitting sounds so attractive that thousands of teen-agers—and older people, too—go into the business each year. But only those who are liked and trusted by their employers and who get along well with their young charges, make the grade.

Almost anyone can be a babysitter, but not everyone can be a *good* sitter. And only the good ones make a success of the job.

Baby-sitting is not child's play. It is a responsible and exacting job that presents certain problems and challenges you must be able to meet. It takes "know-how" in child care and in employer-employee relations.

you go any further, it might be a good idea to take stock and see how you measure up.

Can you qualify?

1. Do you like children?

Well enough, that is, to clean them when they're dirty, humor them when they're difficult, and comfort them when they're unhappy?

Small children are sometimes stubborn and often hard to understand. They can on occasion try your patience to the breaking point. It isn't easy to maintain your calm and your sense of humor when Junior throws his dinner on the floor, bowl and all.

Clearly, the person who dislikes or fails to understand children has no business being a sitter. The better you like children, the more competent a baby-sitter you are apt to be. Successful sitting requires a genuine love for children. Have you got it?

2. Are you mature enough to sit with children?

Young children are usually self-centered, concerned with getting what they want when they want it.

On the other hand, you, who are close to being a full-fledged adult, should have learned to subordinate your desires to the welfare of others when necessary. This sign of maturity—the ability to think of others before yourself—is important in taking care of children.

Suppose the child wakes in the night and needs comforting. Can you sit contentedly for a while, rocking and soothing him? Are you happy for the opportunity to do something for him?

Or do you think instead of what you could be doing if the child hadn't so "thoughtlessly" awakened? Are you annoyed because you feel he is spoiling your evening?

When you sit, you must be prepared to work for your money. You have contracted for a job and must meet its obligations, no matter how inconvenient they may seem. Can you live up to this agreement?

3. Do you have a strong sense of responsibility?

When you sit, you alone are responsible for the safety and well-being of your charges. Your job is to stay on the scene to prevent any mishaps and to take prompt, sensible action if something does go wrong.

This means you can't leave the children alone "just for a minute" while you race to the corner drugstore for a magazine, or home for a book you've forgotten. It means putting the children ahead of your own comfort and convenience.

Are you prepared to take your responsibility seriously?

4. Are you a fairly calm, easygoing person?

Can you take things in your stride? You can't handle a child who is out of sorts if you are out of sorts yourself! If you're the kind of person who is easily upset, a crying baby will unnerve you at the first wail.

If you are unsure of yourself, the child will sense it and act accordingly. He'll yell harder, he'll want his mommy, he'll continue to "act up." You must be patient and calm with a child, and confident of your own ability. If you are prepared for your job, you'll be more sure of yourself, which in turn will inspire confidence in the child.

Can you keep your head and your sense of humor amid howls and screams?

5. Can you cope with an emergency?

Would you feel helpless in the face of a temper tantrum? Would you get hysterical if Junior took a bad tumble? Would you get panicky if the electricity suddenly failed?

If you haven't yet experienced an emergency while sitting, you may find it hard to know *how* you would react. But you *can* ask yourself: "Have I generally been calm and had presence of mind when unexpected things have happened?"

Of course, you're not going to meet with emergencies every time you sit. You may never face any such circumstances. But it's a good idea to know how you would act if something unforeseen should happen.

Common sense will almost always carry you through the emergencies you are likely to meet while sitting. It's really a matter of being able to act calmly and quickly, of knowing when and how to telephone for outside help, of being able to explain the circumstances to those you call, and of being able to carry out their instructions.

Presence of mind and the power to act are two important things you must bring with you when you sit with a child. Do you have them?

How did you make out?

Your answers to the above questions should give you some idea of the kind of sitter you'd make. They should also help you see if you really *want* to be a sitter.

It's important for you to be honest with yourself about these things. Baby-sitting is like any other job; if you take it on, you must *want* to make good at it or you never will. To make good, you will need a real interest in your work—children, in this case. And you will have to be willing to learn the skills of the job.

If deep down inside you know you haven't passed this test, then in fairness to yourself and others, you should look for some other way of earning money.

If, on the other hand, you meet these qualifications, then the babysitting profession really *needs* you.

Your sitting problems

If you've ever done any sitting, you know it's anything but a snap job. Here's a list of some of the problems and decisions sitters usually face. Check those you think may give you trouble.

- How much should you charge?
- How should you "negotiate" with parents for your wages?
- What should you do if you're asked to wash dishes or help with housework?
 - Can you use the telephone, the radio, the TV set?
 - Can you have friends in when you sit?
 - How much noise can you make when the children are sleeping?
 - How should you handle parents who consistently get home later than they promise?
 - How can you be sure of an escort home?
 - How do you diaper a baby?
 - How do you warm a bottle and feed a baby?
 - Should you bathe a baby?
 - What should you do when a child cries?
 - How do you cook a simple meal for children?
 - How can you cope with several children?
 - How can you keep children safe from harm?
 - How should you handle a temper tantrum?
 - What should you do if a child gets sick?
 - How can you get help?
 - What should you do in an emergency?
 - How can you get the most from your free sitting moments?

If you don't know how to solve all these problems, don't be discouraged. That's what this booklet is for—to give you some guidance. After you read this booklet and talk the problems over with your friends, you'll find you have more confidence in your own ability.

Your new knowledge will certainly give you moral support in some of the tougher decisions you must make. So here goes!

What every sitter should know

AS YOU arrive promptly at 7:00 to sit for the first time with Bobby, age 14 months, Mr. and Mrs. Sanders greet you on the run: "Bobby's in bed—we'll be back by 12:00!"

And they're gone, even before you've taken off your hat and coat. Well, you think, that's fine. All I have to do is sit around and let the salary pile up. Sounds like a perfect arrangement.

Of course you know what is apt to happen a short time later: Bobby makes a bid for attention with a howl. Now you work for your money!

"Where's his bedroom?" you groan as you dash down a hallway full of doors. "Now, where's the light switch?"

Bobby is howling louder now. At the sight of you, a stranger, his screams increase. Finally you get him quiet. He has no intention, however, of going to sleep. Every time you put him back in bed, he cries.

What now? Maybe a bottle will help. With your arms full of Bobby, you struggle to the kitchen. But where are the bottles?

You have never felt so helpless. You can't call the Sanders because you haven't the faintest notion where they are. They didn't say and you didn't have a chance to ask.

Maybe you finally get Bobby to sleep. More likely, you end up holding him until the Sanders get home. Either way, it's been a trying evening. But most of the trouble could have been avoided—if you'd only known a few things in advance.

If you'd only known . . .

Often, in the confusion that greets your arrival for a sitting job, you fail to get enough briefing. You're no mind reader. No matter how

much you know about children in general, you still need special instructions for each sitting date.

Take the time you sat with Bobby, for example. How much simpler things would have been if:

1. You'd been shown where his room was.

2. You'd had a chance to get acquainted with Bobby before he started crying.

3. You'd had instructions about giving him a bottle.

4. You'd known Bobby always cries for a few minutes before he falls asleep.

5. You'd known where the Sanders had gone.

A little black book

The one sure way to get a good briefing is to ask about these things *before* the parents leave. But it's hard to remember *everything*.

Here's how Janice solved the problem. She bought a looseleaf notebook and assigned two pages to each of her sitting customers.

The first page she devoted to permanent information about her "client." She planned to keep this up to date. The sample on page 10 shows how Janice's page was set up.

Next to this page Janice drew up a second companion page of "Special Information on Today's Sitting Date." The information on this page would differ each time she sat. It looked like the sample on page 11.

Now all she had to do was fill in the blanks. Janice took the little black book to her next sitting date, which was at the Rogers'. The immediate and favorable response of the Rogers' convinced her that she had hit on a really good idea.

Janice opened the book to the Rogers' pages and asked them to help her fill in the information *before they left*. She arrived a few minutes ahead of schedule so she wouldn't delay them.

It took only a few minutes the first time, and even less after that. Janice, of course, kept the page of permanent information and so she didn't need to ask those questions again. From time to time there were some changes, as for example in the child's sleeping habits. Janice simply brought her record up to date.



You'll often avoid trouble if you get some instructions beforehand.

PERMANENT INFORMATION

Name of parents _____

Home address _____ Phone number _____

Child's name _____ Age _____ Pet names _____

Neighbor's name _____

Address _____ Phone number _____

Doctor's name _____ Phone number _____

Feeding instructions _____

Clothing instructions _____

Habits of child (sleeping, crying, toilet, etc.) _____

Special do's and don'ts (What things please him? What things frighten him?)

General Checklist

Do I know?

General floor plan of house, especially all exits _____

Location of child's room _____

Location of light switches _____

Location of phone _____

How to operate stove _____

Location of child's food (bottles, nipples, etc.) _____

Location of child's clothing (diapers, bathrobe, etc.) _____

Location of child's ointments, powder, etc. _____

The second page she filled out whenever she sat for the Rogers. But even here few changes were needed from one time to the next.

What do you think of Janice's plan? It sounds like a pretty good one. But you undoubtedly can improve on it to make it fit your own needs more closely.

You may have wondered why Janice included some of the questions in her book. Did she really need to know *all* these things? Let's take them up in a little more detail and see.

SPECIAL INFORMATION ON TODAY'S SITTING DATE

Where can parents be reached?

Name _____ Address _____ Phone number _____

Will neighbors be home? _____ If not, neighbor who will be available while parents are away is:

Name _____ Address _____ Phone number _____

Other special instructions.

Who's your employer?

Do you think it's foolish to include the name, address, and phone number of your employer? You know those facts, of course. How else could you be sitting for her?

Well, believe it or not, here's what actually happened to one fellow. One day Frank got a phone call that went like this:

"You don't know me, but Mrs. Selden recommended you highly. We want you to sit with our little boy tonight."

Frank agreed, and at the appointed hour a woman called for him in her car. During the ride to her house, she kept up a running conversation so that Frank didn't have a chance to say much. He was too embarrassed to interrupt and ask her name.

It was dark when they reached the house, and while Frank knew vaguely what neighborhood he was in, he couldn't see the house number. As a matter of fact, he didn't even know what street he was on.

If an emergency had come up, a fire for example, and Frank had had to phone for help, he wouldn't have been able to say where the house was or to whom it belonged.

Where, oh where, have the parents gone?

If the parents are visiting friends, this question is easy. Write down the name (be sure you get the correct spelling), address, and phone number where they can be reached. *Get all three facts.* People are often vague about phone numbers and you might have to look the people up in the directory.

If your employers are going to the movies or the theater, they can still be reached. Get the name and phone number of the theater, and you can have them paged if you need them.

But perhaps they're going out for a carefree evening with no idea of where they'll be. You might suggest then that they call you at least once during the evening.

You may worry that the parents will question your ability or think you're snooping if you ask these questions. Just the reverse! They'll feel much more confident about leaving their child with such a conscientious person.

A neighbor's number

What if you need help in a hurry? During years of sitting you may never once need emergency help. But it's a comfortable feeling to know you can get it when you want it. The next-door neighbor is the ideal source for this help. She is close by, can get to you quickly, and probably is familiar with the family. So be sure to get the neighbor's name, address, and phone number. *And ask your employer if she has checked to see if the neighbor will be home.*

Calling the doctor

Suppose the child gets sick or hurts himself.

Call the child's doctor. For most emergencies, the doctor will give you first-aid instructions. If necessary, he'll come to the house himself. Then the responsibility will be in the proper hands.

You can call the parents after the doctor has been notified. But don't take the time to call them if the doctor says the child needs your immediate attention.

Don't try to handle the situation alone. If you are unable to reach the doctor at once, call the neighbor. Then with two people on the scene, the threefold task of caring for the child, contacting the doctor, and reaching the parents can be more easily managed.

A Cook's tour

When you sit for a new employer, find out about the house—where the child's room is and where his things are.

People get so used to their own homes that they sometimes assume everyone knows the floor plan. So ask for a tour of the house or apart-



If a child gets sick, it's wise to telephone the doctor right away.

ment.. Then you'll be able to get around with ease. The parents won't think you are nosy—just smart!

It's important to know where the telephone is. Maybe it's in a closet or tucked away in a bedroom. The parents know where it is, but if you don't, you may be in for a game of hide-and-seek. Have you ever tried to track down a ringing phone when you didn't know its location? The picture grows even more desperate when you are afraid the continual ringing will wake the child. If you have to use the phone and don't know where it is, you won't even have the ringing to guide you to it. So make sure you've spotted it before the parents leave.

At home on the range

Are you cooking with gas? Maybe your employer cooks with electricity. Don't make this discovery when it's time to warm a bottle or heat some food. New electric stoves have instrument panels resembling those on jet planes! You'll have to find out what buttons to push to get the burners going—and to turn them off.

If it's a gas stove, learn how to light the burners. Some old stoves require matches for this procedure, so find out where these are kept.

Here's food for thought

Sometimes your sitting chores will include getting meals for a child or giving a bottle to a baby.

You can count on having to give a bottle if you sit with a baby two or three months old. He usually requires an evening feeding. Find out where his bottles are kept (usually in the refrigerator) and how much milk the baby generally drinks. And remember that you always heat milk for an infant.

All of Chapter 3 is devoted to baby care so we won't go into details now. But every mother has her own ideas about feeding her cherub. Don't forget to ask her.

The older baby—three months and up—usually sleeps through the night. But suppose he wakes and you have a hard time comforting him? A bottle of milk might help. Find out, though, if his mother approves of irregular feedings. Some mothers don't want their children to have milk during the night. Others allow some water. It is best to know in advance what each mother wishes.

When you're to serve a meal to older children, ask the mother either to prepare things in advance and tell you where they are, or to tell you just what to serve, how to serve it, and where everything is.



Ask the mother to lay out clothes so you won't have to hunt for them.

calls him Ricky, he'll wonder who you are when you call him Dicky or Richard or Dick! One of the first things a child learns is his name, and it's important to him. You won't seem nearly so much like a stranger if you call him by the name he knows and is used to.

Special instructions

Does four-year-old Bill's cry in the night mean he wants to go to the toilet? Is nine-month-old Jill's cry supposed to be ignored once you've checked to see if she's all right?

Every child is different. And all parents have their own ideas on how to care for their children! Find out what each mother does when:

1. Her child cries.
2. He wants something to eat.
3. He wants something to drink.
4. He's out of sorts.
5. He's playful when he should be sleeping.
6. You fill in the rest!

Other special instructions may include anything from letting the child stay up an hour longer than usual to giving him an extra bottle.

Before the parents leave, ask them if there is anything special you should know for that night.

Rummaging around in a refrigerator can be frustrating. Get instructions before you put the feedbag on your young charge!

What should he wear?

Have you ever ransacked drawers and closets looking for a child's clothes? Have you ever worried about how much wrapping a child needs for bed or for outings during afternoon sittings? Do away with the problem. Ask the mother to lay out sleeping clothes or outdoor things before she goes.

What's in a name?

Your charge may have been christened Richard, but if everyone calls him Ricky, he'll wonder who you are when you call him Dicky or Richard or Dick! One of the first things a child learns is his name, and it's important to him. You won't seem nearly so much like a stranger if you call him by the name he knows and is used to.

III

Caring for babies

ONCE young Mary is put to bed for the night, her parents forget about her until morning—unless she cries. But Teddy's parents look in on him several times to make sure all is well.

Which parents are doing the "right" thing?

No one can answer that question. There are many schools of thought on baby care. It isn't likely that you'll find any two sets of parents handling an identical situation in the same way.

You, too, may have your own ideas on baby care. You won't always agree on the methods of every family for which you sit.

When you take care of a baby, however, your job is to handle him *exactly as his mother does*, to the best of your knowledge and ability. There are at least two good reasons for this:

1. The mother knows her child best.
2. A child is used to being handled in certain ways—a sudden change in treatment can frighten or upset him.

When you sit with a baby, you become his "substitute parent." Don't try to improve on your employer. Learn as much as you can of her techniques and follow them as faithfully as possible.

Your angel for tonight

Your angel for tonight is Donny, four months old. He's not old enough to reason with or to tell you what he wants.

Will you understand him? Will you know how to attend to his needs?

Donny's mother will volunteer some information about him. You'll ask for still more. But parents can't tell you everything. There are some things a sitter is expected to know without being told.

There is a great deal of important information to be mastered about

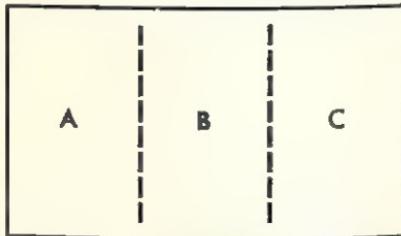
babies. We can't give you a complete course in baby care but we *are* going to offer some tips that will give you a foundation to build on.

Kid in the three-cornered pants

Do you know how to fold a diaper? Don't let that "three-cornered" business throw you. In the first place, modern diapers are generally square or oblong in shape. Secondly, there's more than one way to fold a diaper.

Here's the simplest way: Imagine that the diaper is made up of three parts:

Fold A over B and C over A. This gives you a rectangle, three layers thick.



If Donny were quite small or if you were taking care of a very young baby, you would probably fold the diaper in four parts and still have enough to go around him. Here's a tip: When you take off his soiled diaper, notice how it is folded—then try to fold the clean one the same way.

But don't worry too much about it. Perfection in folding diapers isn't essential. Just make sure that Donny is adequately covered.

The next question is how to get the neatly folded diaper on Donny. He's not a doll so he won't lie still. In fact, he'll probably choose this



Once you catch on to the technique, it's simple to diaper a baby correctly.

time to go through some vigorous calisthenics. The trick is to grasp both his ankles with one hand while you slip half the folded diaper under him with your other hand. Then bring the other half between his legs (by now, of course, you've released his feet and he's probably squirming) and pin the diaper on both sides.

When you push the pins through, keep one hand inside the diaper. If you're going to stick someone, let it be you, not Donny.

Some mothers put a plastic panty on over the baby's diaper. This is easy to put on and will stretch considerably without tearing.

Donny may squirm and fret through the whole diapering process. But there are ways to quiet him. Talk to him, sing to him, soothe him. If this doesn't work, hand him a toy, preferably his favorite (this should be listed in your little black book).

Don't rush through the job or treat Donny roughly. But don't dally either. Be as quick as you can and handle him firmly. Most babies hate being fussed over or treated as if they were made of sugar.

Donny's squirming can lead to trouble if you're not careful. Stand close, directly in front of him (not off to one side), so he doesn't fall off the dressing table or bed. Keep a hand on him at all times.

Dirty diapers

Suppose when you remove Donny's diaper you find that he has had a bowel movement. It can happen, you know. You may not find changing him under these circumstances the most pleasant job in the world, but cleanliness is important to the comfort of a baby. Gently clean Donny's rear with a soft washcloth wrung out in warm water. Then apply talcum or oil, whichever his mother uses, to the area covered by the diaper.

Now what about the diaper? Holding it firmly by one corner, dip it in the toilet for a quick swishing around. Then hang on tight and flush the toilet. Wring the diaper out and it's ready for the pail.

Now is a good time to remind you that you should wash your hands frequently when caring for a baby, and always before feeding him.

Don't leave Donny alone

Since diaper changing may involve your going from the bedroom to the bathroom and back (unless the dressing table or bathinette is in the bathroom), we are going to make a vital, never-to-be forgotten point:

Never leave a baby alone on a dressing table or bed or other unprotected spot! Bring a washcloth with you when you go to change Donny. If you forget it, take him along with you to the bathroom. Wait until he's safely back in his crib before rinsing the diaper.

Some dressing tables and bathinettes have safety straps with which to secure the baby. His mother may rely on them, but you can't afford to take unnecessary chances.

Dressing Donny

Here are a few tips on the rest of Donny's clothes. He will probably wear a shirt and kimono or nightgown. If the shirt is the kind that slips over his head, open up the neck as wide as possible. Lift Donny's head and put the back of the shirt under his neck. Then, still holding the shirt neck wide open, bring it over his head without touching his face. Do the same thing when putting on his nightgown.

It probably won't hurt him if you do brush his face with the garments but he won't like it, and it might frighten him.

The kimono (which opens down the front) and the tie-on shirt go on one arm at a time. Slip on the sleeve of the arm nearest you. Then, carefully supporting his head and neck, lift Donny gently and slip the rest of the garment under him. Now the other sleeve is in position to be slipped on.



When you hold a small baby, always remember to be firm but gentle.

Handling Donny

Perhaps one of the greatest uncertainties of the inexperienced babysitter is how to lift and hold the tiny baby.

Be gentle always. But hold him firmly—he won't break! Pick Donny up by slipping one hand under his head and shoulders. Then you can use your other hand to bring him into the proper position. When you hold him, cradle him in your arms. You must always be sure to support the head of a very young baby, for he isn't able to hold it up himself.

By the time Donny is six months or more, you won't have to worry much about his neck and head. He'll have more control over his body. You can pick him up by placing one hand under each of his arms (not too

close to the armpits). Holding position will be "sitting" in your arms. For safety's sake, keep one of your arms high around his back.

Time for a change

You know how to change Donny, but do you know *when*? He will be wet most of the time, and you can't constantly be changing him. While he's sleeping, it doesn't matter too much since he's warm and snug in his bed. Don't ever waken a baby just to change him!

It's usually a good idea to change Donny before a feeding. However, if he is as hungry as most babies at feeding time, he's going to want his bottle *immediately*. That's all right—you can change him later. If his shirt and kimono are also wet, he'll need a complete change of clothes.

Even the baby who is old enough to stay up and play between naps and feedings will be wet most of the time. You will probably change his diaper once during playtime and again before his nap.

Babies aren't too cooperative about being changed. If Donny is in a bad humor, soothe him first. It's not a good idea to force *anything* on a baby. You can wait a bit to change him if he objects too much.

Should you bathe the baby?

"Better give Donny his bath," his mother might tell you. You don't know exactly how to go about it, but after all, an order is an order. Besides, what's so hard about bathing a baby?

Plenty! So many things can go wrong when you bathe a baby that even though you probably could do it quite competently it's a responsibility no teen-ager should take on.

Donny wants a bottle

How will you know when Donny wants his bottle? He'll let you know, with a howl. Still, it's a good idea to have his mother tell you when he is usually fed. Then you can have the bottle warmed and ready.

Babies don't always operate on schedule. Maybe Donny's mother says he usually gets up at 9:00, but the evening you're there he sleeps until 9:30. No need to wake him for his bottle. He'll let you know when he wants it.

Most child experts agree that the baby is his own best timetable and that it's not necessary to interrupt his sleep to feed him. Some mothers,

however, insist on regular feedings even if it means waking the child. If your employer feels that way about it, *follow her orders.*

For the first two or three months of his life, Donny will probably have an early evening feeding. That will be during the course of your sitting duty.

His mother will tell you where she keeps the bottle, how much he will probably take, and how to heat it. So there isn't much more to know.

The milk should be lukewarm. But you can't tell if it's the right temperature just by feeling the bottle. Test it by squirting a few drops on the inside of your wrist. The milk should be tepid, or lukewarm—neither too hot nor too cold. If you overheat the bottle, run some cold water over it or set it in the refrigerator for a few minutes.

Sit in a comfortable chair and hold Donny closely in one of your arms. You hold the bottle and he'll do the rest. Even before you're settled, he'll have his mouth open and moving like a little bird's. Hold the bottle high enough so there is always milk in the nipple. Otherwise he might suck in some air.

If the nipple becomes clogged so that the baby isn't getting any milk—you'll know because the milk will remain stationary—try a fresh nipple. (Be sure you know where the clean ones are kept.)

Donny will let you know when he's had enough milk. He'll either turn his head or push out the nipple with his tongue. Don't urge any more milk on him even if he hasn't finished every drop.

The entire feeding should be casual and unhurried. Calm, happy mealtimes now form a basis for happy mealtimes all through childhood.

Bubbling

Now comes burping, or bubbling, as it's called in polite circles. This means bringing up any air Donny might have swallowed as he drank his milk. This is an important procedure, because if the air doesn't come up, it sometimes causes stomach cramps.

After Donny has finished his bottle, hold him over your shoulder, on which you have laid a clean diaper to protect your clothes in case he should spit back a little milk. Then gently pat his back. He'll probably emit a noise you didn't think possible from such a tiny thing! Sometimes you may have to pat him for a few minutes before you get results. Be patient. If he doesn't bubble within several minutes, stop patting. He may not need bubbling for once! Find out beforehand what his bubbling habits are and you may save yourself time.

If he stops drinking before he finishes his bottle, try bubbling him. Some babies need several bubblings during the course of a feeding.

Blues in the night

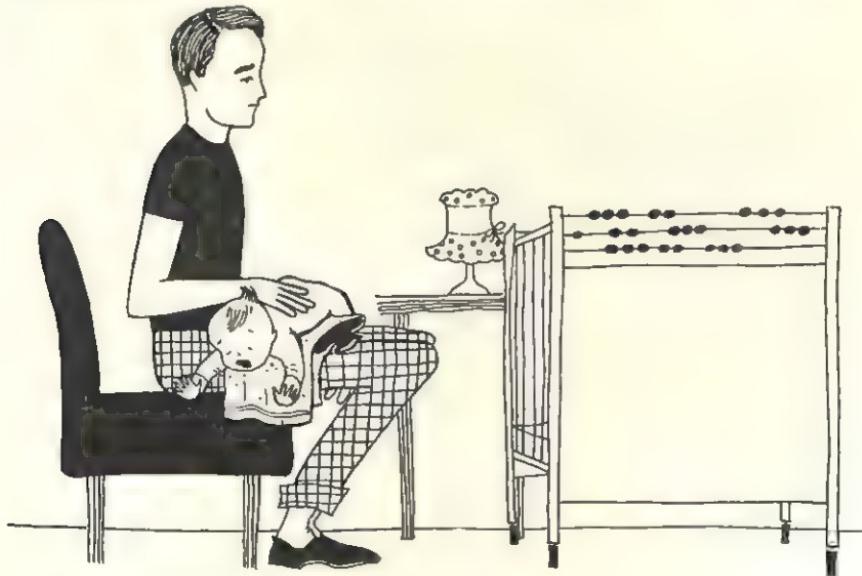
Suppose Donny wakes up crying. What should you do?

A lot depends upon what his mother does, but often you may have to decide for yourself.

Rock him for a while in a rocking chair or in your arms. If that doesn't help, give him some milk (if his mother has approved of irregular feedings) or a little warm, boiled water, which his mother should have ready in a bottle.

A baby often wakes because of stomach cramps. Don't be alarmed; they aren't serious. You can usually tell when a baby has cramps. He will cry and will probably pull his legs up to his chest.

Hold him close and give him the warmth of your body. Walk the floor with him and rock him. If his mother uses a hot water bottle at a time like this, you can use it, too. Fill it with warm—not hot—water, and wrap a towel around it. Put it on your lap and lay the baby over it on his tummy. Until the cramps pass, you will have to hold, comfort, and warm the baby. So be patient.



If the baby has stomach cramps, laying him on a warm-water bottle may help.

Why else would Donny wake up in the night? There may be many reasons, or none at all.

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He might be teething and need comforting. He might be ill. Or he may wake up and cry for no particular reason at all. He doesn't seem to be hungry, sick, or teething. Now what to do? If the baby cries, pick him up and rock him. If he's an older baby—say between 9 and 20 months—he may play for a while. He probably just wants some company. After several minutes, put him back in bed.

Back to bed

Donny will probably do one of three things when you put him back in bed—cry, play and talk to himself, or go right to sleep.

Your only concern is if the baby cries. Some mothers believe in letting the baby "cry it out." The mother of your charge will tell you what she does. But in the absence of instructions:

1. Check to see if everything is all right.
2. Give the baby a chance to settle down. Some babies always cry for a few minutes before falling asleep.
3. Avoid rushing in and out of the room. You'll exhaust both the baby and yourself and he'll never settle down.
4. If the baby continues to cry as if his heart would break, pick him up and soothe him. Give him plenty of time—no quick brush-off. He may go right to sleep the next time you put him down.

Checking on Donny

If Donny sleeps peacefully all evening, what then? What about seeing if he's covered and safe? This is something the baby's mother has already decided for you. Follow her instructions.

If you have no instructions, it's a good idea to look in on the baby just once. Be very quiet about it, though.

You may even leave his door open a crack. But ask his mother first; some mothers keep the baby's door closed. The same is true of a light in Donny's room. Some babies like them, some don't. Again, ask the baby's mother.

During the day

Sometimes you'll sit with a baby during the day. If the baby is just a few months old, he won't do much but eat and sleep. Get a general idea of his feeding times from his mother. If the baby gets solid foods besides the bottle, have his mother tell you where they are, what to give him, and about how much he usually eats.

One year old

By the time Donny is a year old, he's leading a fairly regular life. He gets up about the same time every day and has his meals and naps at more or less fixed hours.



At times a baby needs companionship and wants you to play with him.

Donny will probably go wandering, exploring various parts of the house. Then you'll have to play detective and "tail" him. Not that you want to watch his every move, but it's a good idea to follow him around. A baby on the prowl is a baby who can get into trouble.

His mother may be a less diligent detective and let him go his own way, unescorted. But as a sitter, your responsibility is to know where he is and what he's doing all the time.

A good diversion is an outing in his stroller or carriage. Provided he's properly dressed, you can take him out in almost any weather, mother permitting. It's better, however, not to take a young baby out in sleet, rain, or below-zero temperatures.

Whining

Even the most placid, happy baby whimpers and whines at times. What does it mean? Maybe he wants something to eat. His mother will have told you if he can have a cookie between meals. Maybe he

Between meals and naps, he plays, often by himself. Sometimes he'll want you to play with him. He may look to you for a smile or a cheerful word. He's very likely to hand you his toys, one by one, and just as seriously take them back, one by one. Your role is that of watcher, companion, and cheerleader.

Keep an eye on Donny but try to interfere as little as possible. Don't get the idea you must be "at" him constantly, helping him play, picking him up, chattering incessantly to him. Some babies, accustomed to constant attention from their parents, may need "entertaining" but most children amuse themselves a great deal of the time.

wants something he can't have. Maybe he wants something he *can* have—attention. Maybe he's ready for his nap a little earlier than usual.

First try attention, then a cookie. And finally, if he's still irritable, pop him into bed.

Safety first

Keeping a baby safe is your first responsibility. Here's a short but important list of things to remember:

1. Keep the baby away from windows, radiators, the stove, the hot water heater, the electric heater, the stairs. Be sure the door to the basement stairs is locked.
2. Keep him out of the medicine chest.
3. Keep him out of cabinets.
4. Keep him away from scissors, knives, and other sharp objects.
5. Keep him away from electrical connections, cords, and lamps.
6. Keep cigarettes and matches out of his reach.
7. NEVER LEAVE THE BABY ALONE WHILE HE IS AWAKE.



Never leave a baby alone while he is awake, for he may get into mischief.

We can't have covered every conceivable situation that may arise when you sit with a baby. When in doubt about how to handle a problem, use your common sense. That's all it usually takes anyway. But if the situation is serious and beyond your knowledge, you know where to call for advice and help. Do so!

Toddlers on up

BABIES are easy to sit with. When they're hungry, you feed them. When they're tired, you put them to bed. And when they're unhappy, a long ride in the rocker usually does the trick.

But babies grow up—and assert themselves. Sitting with an older child is generally a battle of wits and wills. It sometimes seems as though you're continually trying to get him to do things he doesn't want to do.

Take bedtime. Six-year-old Bruce looks at you out of the corner of his eye, a mischievous smile hovering over his lips. He has plans, big plans, for taking advantage of his parents' absence to stay up late.

There may be pleas: "Just wait till I finish this game." "Read me a story." "Read me another story." "I want to have my glass of milk in the kitchen."

There may be sly techniques: "Mommy always lets me stay up later on Saturday nights." She doesn't, but Bruce hopes you don't know this.

There may be refusals, tears, or tantrums: "No! No! No!"

If Bruce succeeds in unsettling you, you're lost.

Fair warning

It's a good idea to give a child a little notice before putting him to bed. Instead of an abrupt, "Okay, now it's time," try this approach: "As soon as we finish this game, we'll start getting you ready for bed." That way, he'll be prepared.

When the game is over (Watch him carefully, he'll try to stall!), make it clear that you intend to stick to your word. Actions speak loudly with children.

Be kind, be gentle. But *be firm*. Lead Bruce into the bedroom.

Get his bed ready. Help him put on his night clothes. Be friendly with him but don't waver from your purpose.

If he flatly refuses to go to bed, don't fight him, don't nag him. Ignore him. Let him fall asleep on the rug or stay up until his parents return. This kind of child is the parents' problem, not yours.

Bruce will probably have a favorite toy—maybe a Teddy Bear or a Raggedy Andy—that he takes to bed. You'll want to tuck it in with him.

Roughhousing before bedtime is not in order. It makes Bruce over-excited and unwilling to settle down. Tell or read him a story instead.

You're bound to get the line, "Please tell me another." And later, "Just one more story." Nip this in the bud by saying pleasantly but firmly, "After this story, it's time for Bruce and Teddy to go to sleep."

And don't let that grin make you falter. Stick to your plans. Most children are *ready* and even happy to go to sleep at bedtime. You're not doing them a favor by letting them stay up later.

Popping up

At last! Bruce is all tucked in, and you have a peaceful evening ahead. Maybe! You no sooner get settled with a good book when into the livingroom comes Bruce.

"I want a drink of water," says he with a big smile, or, "I want to go to the bathroom," even though both these items were taken care of just 15 minutes ago. This is a common occurrence with children between the ages of two and three. What do you do?

Giving in to Bruce's demands doesn't seem to help. They only increase in number and frequency. Getting cross with him accomplishes even less. He'll be back a dozen times, looking more innocent and sweet as your anger rises.

The best guess is that Bruce is lonely. At his age he is extremely dependent on his parents' company. With his parents gone, he feels even more alone.

You might prevent his hopping out of bed by being extra attentive during the evening, especially when you tuck him in. Don't just dump him and run. Stay with him for a while.

If he gets up anyway, take him back promptly and firmly. You may have to stay with him again, this time until he falls asleep.

Feeding time

An evening sitting date sometimes includes fixing supper for the children. You already know how important it is to get feeding instructions from the mother.

If the child knows how to feed himself, set the plate in front of him, hand him a spoon, and he'll take care of the rest. Some toddlers still have to be spoon fed. If so, the mother will tell you.

How much should he eat? Start him on his first dish and feed him until he pushes your hand away, spits the food out, or otherwise expresses a loss of interest. Then go on to the next dish. When you get to the pudding, it may seem like he could go on eating it indefinitely. Find out from his mother how much he can have.



Don't force a child to continue eating when he feels he's had enough.

Sometimes a child will start a meal by feeding himself, then get tired and wait for you to feed him the rest. You can usually tell when he has had enough, though the signs vary with every child. One universal sign: He'll refuse any further food! Stop right there; don't force him to eat any more.

Older children cry, too

What makes an older child cry?

He may fall and hurt himself, in which case you should pick him up and comfort him.

He may cry because he is being thwarted. His sister takes his toy. He wants to do something he shouldn't, like pulling books off the shelf.

Or he doesn't want to do something he should, like brushing his teeth. If these are his reasons, give him extra attention and interest him in something else.

He may cry because he is tired. A tired child is often a cranky child, with tears a signal that he is ready for bed. You know what to do about that!

The more the merrier

Up to now we've been referring to your sitting charge in the singular, mainly for the sake of simplicity. Actually, it's just as likely that you'll be sitting with two or more children.

It might mean more work. But it's certainly more fun! For part of the time, anyway, you won't have anything to do but sit and watch. The children will play together.

But, as children will, they are bound to get into scraps. "Billy's got my boat!" "Susie hit me and it hurts!"

These squabbles, often accompanied by much shouting, may be enough to set your teeth on edge. What should you do?

Your role is that of referee. You can't have the children hurting each other. So separate the combatants and find out what the trouble is. Perhaps you'll have to make Billy give back the boat, which may cause him to feel hurt and mistreated. So in exchange for the boat give Billy a smile or a hug or a suggestion for an exciting game, or all three.

The rule to follow in these family spats is to remain calm and friendly with all participants. *Don't play favorites.*



Your role is that of referee when your young charges start fighting.

Special privileges

When there are several children in the family, the older ones are bound to have certain privileges that the younger fry often resent.

"Why do I have to go to bed now?" complains five-year-old Kitty. "Sheila and Susie can stay up later."

When you put the youngest to bed earlier, make her feel it is she who is the lucky one. She gets a special story and a special hug. Spend some time with her alone. Susie and Sheila may have the privilege of staying up later, but Kitty gets special attention.

If one of the children in the family is an infant, will that make your work more difficult? Not necessarily. Before he goes to sleep, the baby will take most of your time. But you can still be a good companion to the older children. Explain to them that once baby is tucked in, you'll all *really* have fun. They won't mind your being busy with baby if they know that soon you'll be all theirs.

You can't leave the baby alone except in his crib or playpen. If the others are at an age where they still have to be watched, try to keep them with you. If one wanders off, you'll have to pick up the baby and then chase after the older child.

Dividing your time between several children needn't be a hard job if you gain their cooperation. Get the older ones to help you with the younger. *But never leave young children alone with a baby.*

Hold that temper!

Jenny wants you to come into the livingroom and play with her *this minute*. You are in the midst of diapering the baby and explain that you can't leave him. Jenny, who is only three, doesn't understand this. She's angry and shows it with a temper tantrum. She screams and stamps and cries. How do you cope with her?

First, stay calm. Don't let your own temper flare up. You might let Jenny cry for a couple of minutes. She will probably stop soon and join you in the baby's bedroom. If this happens, give her something special to do without referring to the recent tempest. You have forgotten it. So should she.

If Jenny continues to scream it's best not to let her get her way. But you could go in and give her a smile, or pick her up and bring her into the bedroom "to help me with the baby."

If temper tantrums become a regular routine when you sit with Jenny, you'd better mention it to her mother.

To spank or not to spank

A word of caution before we go any further: *Do not spank a child under any circumstances!*

Almost all mothers have strong feelings about their children being spanked by others. In four words, *they don't like it!*

Besides, spanking doesn't help much. If Betty throws a vase on the floor and breaks it, she (a) doesn't realize she has done something wrong, or (b) does know and is sorry, or (c) did it deliberately to attract your attention or arouse your anger. Spanking won't help in any of these cases.

If a child gets into something he shouldn't, remove the child, or remove the object. If he puts up a fuss, reason with him. Interest him in something else.

They want to like you

This chapter has dealt with problems children *can* present, so that you will be prepared for the worst. But children need not be difficult—most of the time they're easy to get along with.

As a sitter, you have the chance to get the best out of your charges. But you must give them *your* best.



With their parents away, children will look to you for love and affection.

Children need love and attention at all times, but particularly when their parents leave, for deep down they fear their parents might not come back. They look to you for comfort, assurance, and love.

Management and labor

In YOUR baby-sitting jobs, you'll have to get along not only with your charges, but also with their parents, your employers. This usually won't present many difficulties, but there are some problems that may arise from time to time. They can be solved without embarrassment or misunderstanding if you look ahead and spot possible danger situations. Then you can discuss these matters with your employers *in advance*.

Frankness counts here. So does tact. Added together, they make for happy relations with the families for whom you sit.

Should you do housework?

The answer to this question is up to you. Household tasks not directly connected with children are *not* a normal part of a sitter's job. You are well within your rights to refuse to do them.

You may not mind giving some extra help occasionally, particularly if the family is hard pressed to get away on time. But you may firmly object to its becoming a general practice.

If you feel that housework should not as a rule be included in your sitting chores, you can raise your objections quite simply. Be frank and courteous. Parents don't bite. They are usually most understanding. Explain that your fees are low because you expect only to care for children. That is one reason why you feel free to do homework and other personal tasks when you are not busy with the children. You feel that housework is just not part of your bargain.

The mother who will take offense at your explanation and stop using you as a sitter is rare. She is more likely to drop the matter and just not ask you to do household chores again.

In some cases, a mother may feel she really needs the help and will

offer a small bonus for any housework you do. Here again, you make your own choice. You still have a right to refuse—tactfully. You may, on the other hand, welcome the chance to earn a little more money.

Some feeding of children is part of your job, but there is a limit to how much you should do. The mother should tell you exactly what to serve and should have everything prepared. As a general rule, you should not be expected to do more than heat things up.

Note: Washing and drying your dishes and those of the children *are* in the line of duty.

Making yourself at home

The Smiths' house boasts a radio, a TV set, a pile of magazines, and a well-stocked library. Question: "Can I use them?"

If nothing is said, ask the Smiths. They will probably tell you to go ahead and "make yourself at home." You are not really at home, however, so go easy. Remember that you're using someone else's property and that it should be handled with care. This means no jam spots, lipstick smears, or torn pages in the books, no coupons or ads ripped from magazines.



It's all right to make yourself at home, but check with your employer first.

As far as the radio and TV are concerned, keep them toned down so as not to wake the children. If either set looks complicated and you're not sure what all the knobs and buttons are for, ask the Smiths how to operate the equipment. You don't want to take the chance of putting something

out of order. And of course when you are finished, you'll put things back where you found them.

It's not a good idea to borrow anything to take home. If you're interrupted in the middle of a good story, wait until next time to finish it.

Any social life allowed?

How about contact with the outside world? Can you use the phone? Can you invite friends over? What are the general rules?

Most parents won't mind your using the phone, provided you don't call London or Siam! But always ask them first. If you do use the phone, use it sparingly and don't carry on any endurance-test conversations. Keep any calls *short* and to the point.

How about inviting a friend over to share your lonely vigil? It's usually all right provided you invite no more than *one* friend during an evening. And no parties, please! Again, always ask your employer *before* you ask your friend.

Under any circumstances it's better to omit inviting a friend of the other sex. After all, you already have a date—with one or more little cherubs who require your alert care. This is no time to be entertaining the man or woman in your life. Besides, your conduct may be exemplary, but your employers don't know that. They would prefer you to do your dating on your own time.

Hunger pangs

Along about midnight you may begin to get pretty hungry. How about raiding the icebox?

Parents are usually thoughtful in the food line. They'll put something out for you or tell you to help yourself. In that case, don't hesitate to eat if you're hungry. Just don't clean out the larder!

But what if there's been no mention of food?

Check the milk supply. If you're sure there will be plenty left for the children in the morning, help yourself to a glass. And if the bread supply is high, there's no harm in buttering yourself a slice. No parent would begrudge you that. But stop there.

If you sit regularly in a home where the parents make no food provision for you, why not bring along some fruit and a candy bar? This is a good plan, too, if you are just generally shy about helping yourself to food in someone else's home.

Incidentally, if you have a guest, pass up the refrigerator raid. Your

employer probably won't mind your having something to eat, but she can't be expected to provide for *two* hungry teen-agers.

The door and the phone

It's late at night and you are suddenly startled by the sound of the doorbell. Your first impulse is to open the door. Resist it. The chances are that it will be a friend of the family calling, or a delivery boy, but you can't be sure. So unless your employers tell you to expect someone to come by, just ignore the doorbell.

The phone, however, is a different matter; part of your job is answering it. Have a pencil and pad near by so that you can write down messages. Be sure to ask who is calling and get the correct spelling of the name. Give your employers any messages when they return.

Sleepy time, pal?

The children have been tucked in and asleep for hours. This is to be a late night; the Browns said not to expect them back before 1:30. Around 12:00 you begin getting sleepy. How about a nap?

It's *not* recommended. Your job is to safeguard the children and the house. You can't do it when you're asleep.

You may argue that the parents certainly go to sleep earlier than 1:30 on other nights. That's true. But, being parents, they awaken almost instinctively to their child's cry. You are not likely to do so.

If you plan to sit on a week night, manage a nap at home in the afternoon. If it's the week-end, plan to sleep late the next morning. While on the job, you should be on your toes.

Even if your employers suggest that you bunk on the couch after the children are asleep, you should try to stay awake the entire time they are away.

This is particularly pertinent to sitters who stay overnight. No matter how tempting that bed looks, stay out of it until the parents return and you are relieved of your responsibility.



It's not a good idea to take a nap no matter how sleepy you may get.

A word about sleeping overnight at your employer's house: It's perfectly all right, *provided* your parents fully agree.

Late hours

"We'll try to be back before 11:00, dear," Mrs. Arnold says as she leaves. You've explained that's the hour your parents expect you home.

Eleven o'clock arrives—but not the Arnolds. You call your folks so that they won't worry, but they are annoyed. So are you.

When the Arnolds finally arrive two hours later, you want to give them a piece of your mind, but of course you can't.

You should tell them, however, that you'd prefer that this didn't happen again. Here's one way to broach the matter: "Much as I like sitting for you, Mrs. Arnold, my parents won't let me sit here any more if I don't get home at the agreed time."

You can object to late hours even if no promise is involved. The Franklins come home at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning every time you sit for them, and you simply don't want to stay up that late. That's reasonable. Tell them how you feel. If they continue to be night owls, tell them you're sorry but they'll have to get another sitter.

An escort home

You've been paid and thanked, and you're ready to leave. It's late, the streets are pitch black, and you're five long blocks from home. No one has offered to take you home.

A fellow may not be at all concerned—in fact, he may not even *want* anyone to see him home. But this is an unpleasant situation for a girl.

Most parents wouldn't think of letting you go home alone, so this problem is rare. But it does happen. When it does, you should *ask* for an escort home. You won't be refused. However, you may think, "Well, if I must ask for such an obvious thing, perhaps I'd better not sit for these people again." And if it happens more than once, you may be right.

How often and when?

A good sitter is in frequent demand, but it is extremely important that you limit your number of sitting dates.

Other things come first. You should get adequate sleep. You should also devote some of your free time to recreation. Don't spoil your health or your social life by overdoing your sitting service.

Discuss the "how often" question with your parents. You may arrive at a reasonable plan something like this:

1. Never sit more than three times in any one week.
2. Never sit more than one school night a week.

You are just beginning to get over a bad cold when Mrs. Billings calls to ask you to sit for her. "I'm just getting over a cold," you explain.

The matter may be dropped right there. But should Mrs. Billings ask you to come anyway because the children will be asleep, be firm and refuse. The children may awaken during the evening. It's foolish to endanger their health.

It's also important not to endanger *your* health. If a child is ill, cancel your sitting date. And if *you* are ill, no matter how important a sitting job you may have lined up, break it.

The best laid plans . . .

- Mrs. Murdock phones at the last minute to cancel your sitting date.
- Mrs. Stern had counted on your sitting next Wednesday night but had been too rushed to call sooner. Now it's too late—you already have a job for that night.
- You have to cancel a sitting date. You tried to get a replacement from among your friends, but no luck.

These are some of the minor occupational hazards you can expect. What can you do about them? Handle these situations with tact, courtesy, and understanding. Everybody has a hitch in plans once in a while. If *you* must back out, do so graciously and *only with good reason*. If a sitting date is called off, take it in your stride.

It's confidential

Mrs. Burns just got a mink coat. That's because Mr. Burns had a promotion and a raise. Even so, they don't seem to be a particularly happy couple. They always argue when you're around.

Some gossips in your neighborhood would probably be interested in knowing all about this. But what you see or hear in your employer's home is strictly confidential and should remain so. You should feel a strong obligation not to repeat a word of it to anyone, not even to your parents or your friends. This applies to any conversations you may overhear, any peculiarities or odd habits you happen to observe.

Nor should you compare unfavorable notes on the children with whom you sit. This kind of talk is taboo: "Jenny still wets the bed and

Butch is a brat. I'd much rather sit for the Barons. Their children aren't so terribly spoiled."

Conversation like this is off limits too: "The Snyders have just had their whole house redecorated, but it's terrible. And the Thompsons can't be very well off; their rugs are absolutely threadbare." Sitters who gossip soon find themselves out of jobs.



"Hands off your employer's belongings," is a strict rule for baby-sitters.

It goes without saying that when you're in an employer's home, you don't investigate her desk, mail, clothes, or other belongings. The rule at all times is: Hands off! Private property!

To sum up

The principles of good employer-employee relations in baby-sitting are the same as in any other business:

1. Mutual consideration, respect, and trust
2. Regard for each other's rights
3. A conscientious job on your part to justify your pay
4. A fair wage granted by your employer (This last point deserves a chapter of its own—see Chapter 6.)

The wages of sitting

Scene: The residence of Mr. and Mrs. Robert James.

Time: About 12:30 a.m. Enter Mrs. James, who has just returned from the theater. She is greeted by 16-year-old Mitzi, who has been sitting with the James children for the first time.

MITZI: Hello, Mrs. James. Have a nice time?

MRS. JAMES: Oh, very nice, Mitzi, thanks to you. Did the children give you any trouble?

MITZI: None at all. They were perfect darlings.

MRS. JAMES: Good! Mr. James is waiting out in the car to take you home. How much do we owe you?

MITZI: Whatever you say.

MRS. JAMES (somewhat taken aback): I don't know what to say. What do you think you should get?

MITZI (really flustered): Goodness, Mrs. James. I don't know.

(Automobile horn sounds off stage. Mrs. James and Mitzi stand in confused silence. Horn sounds again, more impatiently this time. No further action on stage except for an exchange of weak grins between the woman and the girl.) Curtain

Can you see yourself in Mitzi's role? This kind of awkward situation occurs often in the sitting profession. Yet it can so easily be avoided. All you need are facts and a plan of action, decided on in advance.

Talking turkey

Talking financial turkey is often difficult for the teen-age sitter. You don't want to appear mercenary or grasping. On the other hand, you

do want to receive fair wages. As a newcomer to the work, you're not sure how much to charge or how to ask for it. Often *you* have to broach the subject, too.

The problem is further complicated by your conditions of employment. Your hours are irregular and you have a number of employers. Should you charge by the hour or by the amount of work you have to do? Your employers differ in their financial status. Should you have special rates for those less well off, or should you have a standard rate for all? Or should you charge what the traffic will bear with higher-income families?

Add to all this the fact that the family atmosphere in which you work is not conducive to hard business arrangements. Frequently you even sit for close friends of your family.

No wonder wages are a chief concern of the sitter. It's true—money is a delicate subject. Your negotiations should be handled with the skill of a diplomat.

Let's take first things first and consider *how much* you should charge.

What's fair and reasonable?

Sitters should be businesslike in setting their rates, but they should not take advantage of their employers. The parents are under a disadvantage in financial negotiations, for these reasons:

1. *They need you more than you need them.* For you, sitting is a source of extra money. For parents, a sitter can make the difference between a balanced, happy home and social life and a restricted life of husband and wife going out separately or not at all.

2. *The demand for good sitters far exceeds the supply (in most places).* It's a simple economic fact that when a certain kind of worker is scarce, he can set his own prices.

3. *Parents are anxious not to take advantage of a younger person.* As a result, they sometimes put themselves in a position where you could exploit them if you wanted to. You'll resist this temptation, though, if you want to have harmonious relations with your employers.



Often you may not know just what to charge for sitting services.

Sitters are entitled to ask for, and should receive, a rate of pay that is both fair to them and reasonable to their employers. How can you determine this fair and reasonable rate?

1. *Check your competition.* Find out what other sitters in your community are charging. Ask your friends how much they get for sitting.

2. *Ask your parents.* They can give you the adult viewpoint and often are in a position to know if your price is fair reward for your time and a reasonable charge for other parents in the neighborhood.

3. *Check your conscience.* If you feel the current rate is too high, you can charge a smaller fee. You may, for example, feel that as a beginner you are not yet justified in receiving a "veteran's" pay. Then, too, the neighborhood parents for whom you will be sitting may not be as well off as those in other communities.

Fees vary from one part of the country to another—they're usually higher in cities than in rural communities. They even vary among different sections of the same city. But from coast to coast, sitters are generally paid by the hour. This seems to be the fairest way to charge—fairest to sitter and to parents.

Just as a point of reference to help you decide on your own fee, most parents and sitters think that between 35 and 50 cents an hour is a reasonable rate.

Once you've set your rate, keep it standard for all sitting jobs. Some sitters try charging more to people they think are well off, less to those they feel can't afford it. Some sitters raise their fees for parents (or children) they're not too keen about, lower them for those they like.

This practice can only lead to trouble. Word gets around, hard feelings result, and you are likely to lose both jobs and friends.

Getting straight from the start

Mitzi's difficulty with Mrs. James arose from their failure to come to wage terms *in advance*. The first time you speak to a prospective employer is the time to discuss pay. If she doesn't bring it up, you must. You



You'll avoid confusion about money if you settle your wages in advance.

may find this a little embarrassing, but it's the only sure way to avoid further, and perhaps more serious, embarrassment.

"Fifty cents an hour!" exclaimed one mother at the conclusion of a sitting date. "If I had known it would be that much I would have called someone else!"

Avoid getting yourself into a spot like that. If for any reason you are unable to discuss wages before accepting the date, then the absolute deadline is the moment before your employer is about to leave you with her children.

You might say: "I'm sure everything will be fine, Mrs. Carson. And in case I didn't mention it, I charge 35 cents an hour. I just wanted you to know."

Collecting your fee

Most often the returning parent will ask you point-blank: "What do I owe you?"

Then it's easy. Tell her. No need for hemming and hawing. You will have noted the time of your arrival (a good idea is to write it down). It's simple mathematics to figure how long you've sat and then multiply it by your hourly rate. Just say in your most polite manner: "I charge 50 cents an hour. I sat 5 hours. So that will be \$2.50."

You may come to dread the return of some parents. You know they aren't going to mention your pay. They never do. You always have to bring up the subject.

It's unfortunate that some parents—luckily, only a few—put this burden on you. But it really isn't too heavy a load. If you must ask, then ask! It may put you more at ease to sugar-coat the pill. Have the amount all figured out, and when Mrs. Fenwick thanks you, don't just blurt out, "You owe me \$3.00." Instead, you might say: "You're very welcome. It's always fun to sit with Connie and Bill. Let's see, that comes to \$3.00 tonight."

Odd hours

What if your sitting time doesn't come out "even"? Do you charge for that extra 10 or 20 minutes?

It's up to you. Some sitters disregard uneven amounts of time. They may sit for 4 hours and 10 minutes and charge only for 4 hours. Next time they may ask a full 5-hour charge for only 4 hours and 50 minutes of sitting. This isn't very businesslike. It's best always to charge the exact

amount for the time you've put in. Don't feel you are being a stickler for details. You deserve to be paid for your time. And minutes are money.

"When does my working time start?"

Another question that troubles many sitters is when their working time starts.

Francie never knows at what point to start charging. Often she arrives at a sitting date at the appointed time, and her employers take a half-hour to get out of the house. Then when she goes to tote up her take, she wonders if she should count from the time she arrived or from the time the parents left.

Bob is also confused. It sometimes takes him 15 minutes to get to a sitting date and another 15 minutes to get home again. Should he charge from the time he leaves home or from the time he arrives at his sitting date?

To clear up this confusion, consider sitting just like most other jobs: Your pay is based on the actual amount of time you spend at your "place of business."

Bob can't count traveling time. But Francie's pay starts as soon as she arrives, regardless of when the parents leave.

It's customary, however, to "stop the clock" when the parents come home. Most sitters don't include the time it takes them to settle up and get ready to leave.

More children, more money?

Should you charge more for sitting with two or three children than you do for sitting with one?

The answer is *no!* Some sitters disagree. Take Joanne, for example. She sits regularly for three different families. The first two each have one child and Joanne charges them 35 cents an hour. But the third family boasts three children. Joanne charges them 65 cents an hour—35 cents for the first child and 15 cents for each additional child.

On the surface, Joanne's plan seems logical. But is it really? Can



Most sitters charge the same rate if they watch one or ten children.

you imagine her reaction if she were offered only 10 cents an hour for the sitting time she spends reading or watching television? Yet according to her plan that's the way her time should be figured.

Charging by the hour is really fairest to the sitter and to the parents. Sliding wages based on the number of children and the amount of work involved would be too complicated and often unjust.

Granted, you may have to work hard. But caring for children, whether you just listen for them while they sleep or tend them continually while they are awake, is your job. One child or five children, it's all in the line of duty and the charge should be the same.

More money after midnight?

Occasionally sitters will increase their rates after midnight. There's no particularly good reason for this. What's so magical about midnight? Besides, most parents don't stay out much past 12:00 except on special occasions. Applying the "fair and reasonable" yardstick means that there should be no extra charge for post-midnight sitting.

Any exceptions?

Some sitters set up what they call "budget rates" for special occasions. For example, they'll offer to sit an entire 8-hour day on Saturday for a flat fee of \$2.50 or \$3.00 rather than charging their usual fee of 50 cents an hour. This makes it possible for the busy mother, who otherwise might feel she couldn't afford it, to go shopping or do other necessary errands.

You can make your own decision about whether you want to offer any budget rates, and what to charge if the occasion does arise.

There is another common exception to the standard rate rule, and a difficult one to handle: sitting for friends of your family.

The Warrens have been close friends of your parents ever since *you* were a baby. The time comes when they ask for your services as a sitter. Are you expected to sit "for free"? Do your parents frown on your accepting money from them?

This kind of a situation can be awkward. Yet it is just the sort of job that you can't very well refuse.

Perhaps you'll be lucky and the Warrens will offer to make a businesslike arrangement with you. Or maybe you don't mind sitting for them without pay, especially if it's just a matter of helping them out for one evening. You may feel indebted to them for all the nice things they've done for you in the past. In either case, you have no problem.

But what if they make free sitting a regular practice? This is a tough problem to solve.

Why not try a heart-to-heart talk with Mrs. Warren? Tell her how much you usually charge and explain that sitting is your job. Point out that you have had to turn down "paying customers" to sit with her children. You might also explain this to your own parents. Both your parents and the Warrens will undoubtedly see the fairness of your position and will be agreeable to making some sort of arrangement.

You might offer Mrs. Warren this bonus of friendship: "I'll always check with you before I take another sitting date so you can be sure you'll never be without a sitter when you need one." Or you might offer her a cut rate. But do this *only* as a last resort.

Raising the ante

When is an increase in your rates justified and how do you go about getting it?

If there has been a general increase in sitting rates in your community, you are certainly justified in increasing yours. You might also ask for an increase if your rate was below the current one to begin with. That was John's case.

During his first year as a sitter, John charged a straight 35 cents an hour. Most of his friends charged 50 cents but he felt that as long as he was new at the job he'd charge less. After a year he began to wonder how to ask for a raise to 50 cents an hour.

In John's place, some sitters would have solved the problem by charging new customers the higher amount but keeping the former rate for old customers. However, if the word gets around, this practice can lead to ill feeling on the part of new clients.

John decided to raise his price for all his customers. There was nothing wrong with that. He was frank about it, and explained his reasons to every employer.

No one expects parents to be particularly happy about having to pay more money. But if they feel the sitter is worth the extra money and that the increased rate is a fair one, they'll fall in line gracefully.

On account

The last problem up for consideration is a really ticklish one. We'll let Nora tell you about it:

"Mrs. Carter doesn't always pay me on the evening I sit. She often says, 'Well, Nora, I'm afraid I'm a little short this week. Let's put it on

account for next time.' I wouldn't mind, but sometimes next time is a long way off. And even then I have to remind her. Sometimes this goes on for several sittings and she winds up owing me a really big sum. I can tell Mrs. Carter is upset when she finally pays it. I know I'm entitled to the money, but I feel awful about it, anyway."

Fortunately Nora's problem is not too common, but when it does come up it's painful to everyone concerned.

Nora let the situation go on for too long. Naturally she couldn't insist on the money when Mrs. Carter said she didn't have it. But Nora could have told her right at the start that "letting it go until next time" was unsatisfactory.

She might have said, "That's too bad, Mrs. Carter. I really need the money. I was depending on getting it."

At this point Mrs. Carter *should* have gotten the idea. But one hint is enough. If Nora didn't get *paid in full* at the very next sitting, she should have crossed Mrs. Carter off her list. This sounds hard-boiled, but Mrs. Carter was abusing Nora's generosity. Now, about the only thing Nora can do is to send Mrs. Carter a bill for the unpaid balance, and then to stop accepting sitting dates from her.

Diplomatic relations

Wages need not be a problem if you follow a few simple rules:

1. Decide on a fair and reasonable rate.
2. Apply the rate equally to all customers and on all (or almost all) occasions.
3. Let your employer know in advance what your rate is.
4. Be thoroughly businesslike in your dealings.
5. Handle your wage negotiations with tact, courtesy, and firmness.



There may be trouble ahead if you let an employer run up a big bill.

that "letting it go until next time"

Alone at last

WHAT do you do with the sitting hours you have to yourself? After reading the action-packed chapters on child care, you may wonder *what* hours you'll have to yourself. Don't worry, there will be many of them. The various problems you may face won't all come up during the course of one sitting date. Many will never arise at all.

When you sit during the day, you'll probably be kept busy most of the time. Evenings, too, may sometimes be full, depending on the ages and habits of your charges. You will have a busy hour or so feeding and comforting the baby who needs an evening bottle. You will have to get older children ready for bed. And there will be times when you'll be completely taken up by ill or fretful children. The facts remain, however, that:

- Most of your sitting will be at night.
- Most children are in bed by 8:00.
- Most evenings you won't hear a peep out of them.

So the question is a real one: What do you do with your time?

Homework?

A quiet house, all to yourself, is an ideal setting for study. But don't let your homework pile up for your sitting evenings. And don't count on being able to cram for an exam during a sitting date. You will probably have plenty of time for study, but you can't always depend on it.

Like most high school students, though, you always have some homework to catch up on. So bring your books along when you sit.

What else?

You won't want to hit the books for hours on end every time you sit. Just relaxing, listening to the radio, or watching television is a pleasant



Quiet sitting hours offer a wonderful opportunity for getting homework done.

way to fill your time. Everyone needs that kind of an evening once in a while.

But even loafing can become a bore. Time is a precious article. If you get tired of doing nothing, there's plenty you *can* do.

You may feel there aren't too many things you can do in someone else's home. That's true only if you come unprepared. Plan your evening in advance and bring the required paraphernalia with you.

Bill loads all his shoes and shining equipment into a shopping bag and totes them to a sitting date about once a month. He spreads newspapers over the kitchen floor and has a fine time shining his shoes—and his father's—to a mirror finish.

Marge brings her sewing and knitting. She has already knit a scarf just on her sitting time alone.

Joe brings his stamp collection or stationery. He looks forward to his sitting evenings as a good opportunity to keep up with his correspondence and his hobby.

You'll find there are any number of things you "never have time to do" that you will be able to accomplish during a sitting date.

Time for reading

Do you get much time to read? For fun, that is. You may be so busy with homework and required reading that your time for outside, purely pleasure reading is nil.

Some young people think they don't like reading. One reason may be that they seldom, if ever, read for pleasure.

If you happen to be one of these anti-readers, a sitting date is a perfect time to discover what you've been missing. Drop in at the library, select one or two books that strike your fancy, and take them with you when you sit.

When you get bored—with loafing, chores, knitting, and letter-writing—try a book. If your selection was wise, the evening may turn out to be surprisingly enjoyable.

Time for thinking

Just as an experiment, try devoting a little time on your next sitting date to *thinking*. Does that sound peculiar? Actually, most people lead such active lives that they don't devote much time to meditation, except when they should be concentrating on algebra equations or piano practice or some other activity. A little reflection on your problems or on what you want to do next week or with the rest of your life may prove profitable.

Sometimes a difficulty that is troubling you may seem too complex for a solution when your mind is crammed with so many problems during the day. A quiet evening alone is a good time to examine your hopes, your plans, and your problems.

Keeping an ear open

Your ingenuity will help you select many more things to do with your free sitting time. Use it for fun. Use it for relaxation. Use it for hobbies or homework, reading or contemplation, or whatever satisfies you.

But use it!

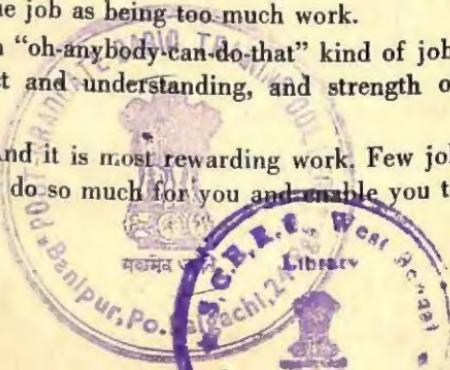
Watch out, however, for the danger of becoming so absorbed in what you are doing that you fail to hear the children.

In conclusion

We hope that by learning about the many challenges baby-sitting presents, you have not dismissed the job as being too much work.

It's true, baby-sitting is not an "oh-anybody-can-do-that" kind of job. It takes knowledge and skill, tact and understanding, and strength of character.

But it's interesting and fun. And it is most rewarding work. Few job opportunities open to you now can do so much for you and enable you to do so much for others.



For more information . . .

The following reading materials will help to supplement the information in this booklet. Ask your counselor or librarian if they are available in your school or public library.

Child Care and Guidance. *Helen Crandall, Esther R. Mason, and Elizabeth L. Woods.* Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1948. This book, especially planned for use in high school classes, discusses various problems regarding the growth and development of your children.

Infant Care. 9th Ed. Children's Bureau Publication No. 8. Washington, D.C.: Superintendent of Documents, 1951. This helpful book tells simply and clearly how to care for babies. Feeding, clothing, playing, safety, illness, and many other topics are discussed.

Learning to Care for Children. Rev. Ed. *Dorothy E. Bradbury and Edna P. Amidon.* New York: Appleton-Century Co., 1946. This book discusses the many problems of taking care of small children, with illustrative incidents from real life. Among the topics discussed are the meaning of discipline, courtesy, developing confidence, group cooperation, and good habits. A list of references for teachers is also given.

Manual for Baby Sitters. *Marion S. Lowndes.* Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1949. A useful book that discusses the qualifications for good baby-sitters and what sitters should know about the families for whom they work. It describes how to care for babies and young children, both indoors and out, and there is a section giving specific advice for common emergencies. The reference section suggests books to read aloud, games for all ages, and how to cook simple meals.

The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care. *Benjamin Spock.* New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1945. A book that covers just about every question on child care that is likely to puzzle the sitter. This popular book is also published in an inexpensive pocket book edition, and is an invaluable guide for sitters.

Your Child's Development and Guidance Told in Pictures. Rev. Ed. *L. H. Meek.* Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1951. A well-known child psychologist has put together this interesting volume showing pictorially how children develop.

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